

Forgiveness is a Healing Process

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This is a world that promotes fairness and justice. In an ideal world, every person would treat another fairly and justly, but we know that does not always happen. In our lives, we will feel hurt by others. We, as humans hate to feel pain, and emotional hurt seems to be about the most difficult pain for anyone to bear. I'm no better than anyone else. In fact, I believe I feel emotional pain more than many do. I'm what you would call a "sensitive person." I would prefer for someone to stomp on my foot really hard than for someone to stab me in the heart. It's especially painful for me when I feel hurt by someone who has been in my inner circle.

The key to relieving emotional pain is through forgiveness, but it isn't easy to do so. One usually doesn't feel hurt by another's actions or words and immediately instinctively forgive that person. Generally, the "wronged" person goes through stages. What I've experienced is that I typically feel sad and/or angry, which I believe are very natural human emotions. I can choose to wallow in those emotions or to go ahead and experience them and move on. I'll admit sometimes I wallow in them and feel sorry for myself. If I go one step further and invite my friends to share in my wallowing, I've done myself and others no good. In fact, I may have brought others down to my level of pain in the process.

I believe a better choice than wallowing in our own emotions or sharing others in our sadness or anger is to take our pain to God. I don't see any harm in going ahead and venting to Him about how sad, hurt, and/or angry we feel. (After all, He already knows about it!) Then, ask God to help you forgive the person. He realizes forgiveness does not come naturally to us. Even though we are told in the scriptures to forgive others so we ourselves will be forgiven, it's not generally something that is instinctive. We need to work through the process, and I believe partnering up with God is the best way to do so.

The next step in the process of forgiveness is to think about how we may have contributed to the problem. It's so easy for us to just blame the other person. Taking ownership for our participation is tougher. It means that we need to honestly evaluate ourselves. When we recognize that we have contributed in some way to a misunderstanding or hurtful situation, we need to work on forgiving ourselves as well as the other person.

When we get to a place where we are ready to forgive the other person who has hurt us, it's usually best to approach the person and seek reconciliation. Such a conversation ideally includes admitting our participation in the situation. It may also mean apologizing for our contribution. Whether the person wants to be reconciled with us or not, we will have done what we know God expects of us. We will have forgiven another as we want our Heavenly Father to forgive us.

Forgiveness is not just a requirement of God—it's also a very healthy thing for us to do. Whenever I have come to the place where I have been able to forgive someone, I feel so free. Withholding forgiveness from another is like a prison. It continues to keep us trapped in pain and may be hurting others. When we forgive others, we can break free and move forward in our lives. Forgiveness is a healing process. By practicing forgiveness, you can heal your pain and potentially restore relationships. Besides that, it's the right thing to do.